

CHRISTMAS? CHRISTMAS!

By A. BRAYNARD NELSON

It seems a little strange that I, who now face every Christmas time alone, no family left to be with for the holiday season, should be writing about the joys of Christmas, it's spirit, the manifestation "Peace on Earth, Good-will to Men!" The carols swell from young throats, sincere in meaning, full of the depth of realization that every man is our brother, no matter what his station in life, whether he be one color or another, whether he be drunk or sober, whether he be young or old, whether he be an intelligence brighter than the lights on the Christmas tree, or dull, or even morbid. All these are our brothers, and beneath their guarded look, or circumspect personality, we KNOW that at this time, they have only good thoughts for us. Come, let us be happy, let us give with all our hearts, not only these little trinkets which money can buy, but also of that Spirit of Fullness, of which we are all so capable at this time. The words ring out with every breath, "This is the time to Sing!"

Some few of us feel excluded because we are, we say to ourselves, alone. But we are not alone, and if we feel so, we delude ourselves; we are self-eliminated. Is there no one to whom we can give something of our hearts, our hands, or our time? Is there no child on the streets to befriend? Then we may know that we have been quite miserly with these gifts, all year, and have—saddest experience of all—forgotten how to give! And nothing can so isolate us as this.

In the immortal words of Kahlil Gibran ("The Prophet"): "And there are those who have little, and give it all. These are the believers in life, and their coffer is never empty."

Shall I go sorrowing that this Christmas is not as other Yules? No, I shall go rejoicing that yet Christmas IS everywhere! Though I shall sometime join my loved ones, and my body return to dust, Christmas, like the world-love of Brotherhood, shall endure. For these thoughts, I cling to this Spirit of Christmas,—so much bigger than myself,—just as now I cling to love and life, and the beauties thereof.

BEST WISHES

*For A Most Joyous Holiday Season to All
Fellow Organic Friends and Viltis
Readers*

S/Sgt. MORDY R. ALNOLD
Peleliu, Palau. So. Pacific.

CONVERSATION PIECE

GENE WIERBACH

In polite civilian circles gossip usually starts off with these time honored phrases, "Dame Rumor Hath It", or "I'll tell you some dirt if you promise not to tell a soul". Of course the recipient of the choice tidbit makes the promise knowing that as soon as the new newsmonger leaves he or she will tell "all" into the nearest ear or telephone.

In the army news travels in much the same way, only the G-I is never cautioned not to spread the rumor but is rather encouraged to add his own dressing and pass it along to his avid listeners. Then too, in the army, rumors fall into three classes. The first of these and the most widely known is the Latrine Rumor. These are started in the well known army-meeting places and are of only a local nature. The Company "rumorspreader" (and every

outfit has at least two) enjoys a field-day here. In the G-I vernacular he goes by another name far too indelicate for the printed page. But here he holds forth with tales about chow, which will include either fried chicken or ice cream or both at the net meal. He may go so far as to foretell that a "much loved Sergeant" is to be busted or transferred. The second kind of rumor is called, "The latest poop from the group" and may be originated by a PFC or Corporal who works in a Headquarters Personnel Section. Here, above the clacking of dozens of army-type-writers, he hears parts of a conversation between two Second Louies. At once he pounces on this news and carries it back to his Company in triumph. This latest poop from the group may include such trivial things as a coming IG Inspector or the oft told rumor that ratings have been unfrozen.

The third kind of rumor starts in the nearest army-town. This is proven by the expression, "If you want to hear any news about the Camp go to town and ask a civilian". These are really whoppers and because of their magnitude fall on deaf ears. Imagine repeating a rumor that the Camp is to be transformed into a Home for Indigent WACS or that Henry Ford is to purchase same and use for a Housing Project!

But G-I Joe and Mac must have something to talk about, especially when the subject of "points" is exhausted and latrine-rumors, poops and tales from town, fill the bill.

The BALTIC STATES

LITH. JEWS FLEE

Austria, U.S. Occupied Zone. To Naujienos, Chicago: Lithuanian Jews who survived the ravages and slaughter of Nazis, are fleeing Russian occupied Lithuania to escape Bolshevik persecution. The Communists claim that if Jews survived at all, it must be because they are pro-Nazis. The surviving Jews are greatly tormented by NKVD (spies) agents with questions as to how they managed to survive. At present there are two Lithuanian - Jewish camps in the American Zone of Austria. These Jews relate that prisons in Lithuania are overflowing, that new prison camps are being built, and that a great number of Lithuanians, claim they are Polish citizens, and as such, they are permitted to leave Lithuania for Poland. Once in Poland, they escape to American occupied zones of Austria and Germany.

U. S. TO PROTECT LITH. REFUGEES

The War Department in Washington informed the American Lithuanian organizations that all Lithuanian refugees found in camps of the American occupied zones will receive the protection of the United States and that the government has informed the Communist agents and provocateurs not to torment and persecute any refugees. The War Department added that of late, the Lithuanian refugees are provided with better rations, than are the Germans themselves, and that each refugee receives 2,300 calories of food daily.

HALF OF BALTS GONE

Due to the deportation of Balts, the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have lost half of their normal population of six million. A total of 60,000 children were taken out of Lithuania a year ago for a "vacation" into central Russia, and the Russians "forgot" to return them.

*A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year
TO THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL
IN THE WORLD*

CAROLYN NICHOLS, of Fairhope
From An Old Friend

CHRISTMAS IN LITHUANIA

By V. F. BELIAJUS

Every holiday had its special attractions, particularly to us youngsters. In fact we awaited the holidays with greater anticipation than did our parents or elders. I and my two younger brothers considered ourselves especially fortunate, because we lived next door to Aunt Skrupskas, and Aunt Skrupskas was to us the symbol of all that is fine in womanhood. She loved the fields and flower garden; she loved the cows, horses, pigs, sheep and the fowl; she loved humanity. She sheltered the wandering and the beggars, and she loved us children. She loved every season day of the week and the holidays, too. She somehow found time for the fields, the flower garden and her animals, for visiting the sick and needy. Amid all this busy activity, she also had time to make elaborate preparations for the forthcoming holidays in accordance with the required ritual, and never failed to hear Mass even though the nearest church was eight miles away in the town of Prienai. As a special precept, she walked to church to serve her Lord. For all of these reasons we considered ourselves fortunate in living next door to Aunt Skrupskas.

Her home was humble. It was a peasant home, with a thatched and moss grown roof, and the cracks of the log wall were stuffed with moss to keep out cold drafts. The windows were small, and because of the winter, were doubly secured with storm windows. The main part of the house, occupying half of the cabin, contained very little furniture. A table, benches along the wall and a few chairs, very primitive in appearance, were all made by uncle Skrupskas. Hearth, loom and spinning wheel took up practically two thirds of all the available space. One the walls hung a beautifully hand carved dish rack, a towel rack, pictures of Saints, the Virgin and various episodes of the life of Christ and a crucifix. The floor was of beaten clay which naturally does not withstand continuous wear, so dents were frequent, but everything was immaculately clean.

Wandering beggars found a generous hearth in the home of Aunt Skrupskas. Throughout the long cold winter months they lingered in the warmth of her shelter, partaking the food she had to offer, and sing hymns and recite the rosary while their haggard bodies rested.

In Lithuania, we do not anticipate the Christmas Day as much as we do Christmas Eve, which we call "Kūčios" (Kuchyos). This is the day of days and the eve of eves. In our district, we never heard of Santa Claus, never received any Christmas presents or dressed Christmas trees. The last was considered a Lutheran invention, and so Catholics did not adorn their homes with them. Besides, the Lithuanians love forests, and to cut an evergreen tree was unnecessary destruction. Nevertheless, there was still much color to Kūčios.

Long before sunset, we three dashed over to Aunt Skrupskas' house, shaking the snow from our "klumpės" (wooden shoes,) we entered, reciting the customary prayer, "Lai būna pagarbintas Jėzus Kristus" (Glory be to Jesus Christ) with much gusto, "ant amžių amžinųjų" (for ever and ever) Aunt Skrupskas responded with a half hidden smile and without interrupting her work about the stove. She had good reason for smiling for she knew well our intentions. We sat down on a bench to be out of her way and at the same time observed closely her every move in the preparation of the feast for Kūčios.

With the rising of the evening star, the table was prepared with a pure white linen table cloth, upon which hay was strewn. A sacred picture of the Nativity, or the madona and the Child, predominated the center of the

table with figures of cows and donkeys surrounding it so that we might be brought closer to the understanding of the conditions at the birth of the Christ. Now the family gathered about the table; Uncle Skrupskas and his two sons, Jonas and Antanas, Grandma Grybas, cousin Agota and her daughter Antosė, mother and we three youngsters. The dishes were set on the hay, and a twelve course dinner, commemorating the twelve apostles, was served, a festive meal that only Kūčios could offer. First we prayed; then a big square wafer, bearing the image of Christ, was broken into as many pieces as there were persons at the table; each member made the sign of the cross, kissed his wafer and ate the allotted piece. Then followed chopped herring mixed with seasoning, herring cutlets rolled in flour and fried in linseed oil, fresh fish, boiled potatoes, biscuits of "baravykų"—the king of Lithuanians mushrooms, "sliziukai"—a batter biscuit, some plain, others mixed with poppy seeds thinned with sweetened water or diluted milk. A hot porridge, "kisielių" of oat flour, mixed with water and leavened for twelve hours, cooked and eaten with poppy-seed milk, which gives a sharp but pleasant flavor, a fruit compote and "midus" (mead—a sweet drink made of hops and honey). This completed the Kūčios meal.

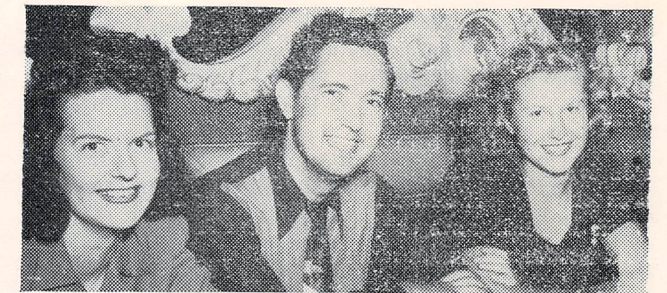
According to custom, the meal lasted for three hours: and to make certain that it did, stories concerning the Nativity and kindred subjects, as well as of all the miracles, were told. Many were the wonders related, and we children listened with open mouths and reverential awe. In relating a legend, Aunt Skrupskas, for proof would point to one of the many "Abrozai" (sacred pictures) that hung about the walls. "On this night, indeed, the waters turn sweeter, and even the animals can speak with a human voice, so that they may praise the glorious name of Him who brought peace on earth". Time never passed more rapidly than the three hours on Kūčios night.

Carols were sung. Since Kūčios falls on the feast of Adam and Eve, "Adomas ir Ieva" was one of the proper hymns to sing. After the dishes were cleared away, the hay was gathered from the table and taken to the stalls and sties to be fed to the cattle, so that they, too might share in the feast activities sanctified through the holy presence of His spirit.

I can remember how reluctantly we would go home, turning our eyes skyward in search of the marvelous star of Bethlehem. Nor did we soon fall asleep, either, for we were thinking, while lying on our beds, only of the Christ-God who brought so much joy to the world.

(This story also appeared in "Naujienos" and "Vytis.")

XMAS GREETINGS FROM THE STAFF



Patsie McNamara, Hugh E. Jones and Janie Matecunas
These are the folders, stampers and addresses of Viltis.
Their greetings for a joyous Christmastide are extended
to all readers.